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HAWAIIAN MONK SEAL TO UNDERGO SURGERY TO REMOVE FISH HOOK

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) announced today that the Hawaiian monk seal airlifted from Kauai to Oahu yesterday was resting quietly at the Kewalo Research Facility but will require surgery to remove a fish hook. Caregivers will attempt to feed him today.

The 20-year old adult male seal, weighing approximately 500 pounds, was captured yesterday near Waimea, Kauai, after eluding marine mammal experts for a week. He was first observed on June 4 with fishing line trailing from his mouth. About 15 feet of fishing line and a leader were removed from the animal before he was airlifted to Oahu by the U.S. Coast Guard.

Marine mammal experts will monitor the seal over the weekend. A veterinarian seal specialist from the Marine Mammal Center in Sausalito, Calif., has been called in to assist on-island monk seal veterinarian Robert Braun in a medical procedure to remove the hook. The surgery will take place early in the coming week.

Officials are still looking for the other hooked monk seal last seen at Poipu a few days ago and are asking the public to call the NOAA Fisheries toll-free 24-hour marine mammal emergency hotline at 1-888-256-9840 if the animal is spotted.

NOAA Fisheries is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources through scientific research, management, enforcement, and the conservation of marine mammals and other protected marine species and their habitat.

To learn more about NOAA Fisheries in Hawaii, visit <http://swr.ucsd.edu/piao/index.htm>. Additional information on Hawaiian monk seals, marine mammals, strandings, and viewing guidelines may be found at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/MMWatch/MMViewing.html.